

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-103 (Canceled) Please cancel claims 1-103 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

104. (Currently Amended) A device for stabilizing tissue within a patient's body comprising: a manifold base having a substantially hollow interior adapted to develop a negative pressure therein;

at least one tissue contact member extending outwardly from said manifold base and being fluidly connected therewith, each of said at least one tissue contact member having a thin compliant seal extending around a perimeter of a bottom surface of the contact member.

105. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said tissue contact member is rotatable with respect to said manifold base.

106. (Original) The device of claim 105, wherein each said tissue contact member is independently rotatable with respect to said manifold base.

107. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said tissue contact member has a hollow interior defining a vacuum chamber, each said vacuum chamber having a first opening adapted to engage at least a portion of the tissue and a second opening fluidly coupled with said manifold base.

108. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein said manifold base comprises a fitting extending therefrom for each respective tissue contact member, each said fitting having an opening therethrough to fluidly connect said respective tissue contact member to said manifold base.

109. (Original) The device of claim 108, wherein each said fitting has an enlarged lip and said tissue contact members are adapted to snap fit over said enlarged lips, thereby substantially sealing said tissue contact members with said fittings without the need for an O-ring or other additional sealing member therebetween.

110. (Original) The device of claim 107, wherein each said vacuum chamber further comprises channels formed on an upper interior surface of each said tissue contact member.

111. (Original) The device of claim 110, wherein said channels are aligned substantially parallel to one another and extend in a direction from said proximal end to said distal end of said tissue contact member.

112. (Original) The device of claim 111, further comprising a deep channel near said distal end of each said tissue contact member, each said deep channel fluidly communicating with said manifold base.

113. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein said at least one tissue contact member comprises a pair of tissue contact members extending substantially parallel to one another from said manifold base.

114. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said compliant seal has a tapering thickness, wherein said thickness is greater adjacent said bottom surface of said tissue contact member and tapers thinner in a direction extending away from said bottom surface.

115. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said tissue contact member has a proximal end and a distal end and each said seal has a tapering length, said length measuring a distance that said seal extends away from said bottom surface of the respective tissue contact member.

116. (Original) The device of claim 115, wherein said length of each said seal is greater near said proximal end of said tissue contact member than near said distal end of said tissue contact member.

117. (Original) The system of claim 104, wherein each said seal comprises SOFTFLEX.

118. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said tissue contact member has an asymmetrical transverse cross-section, a portion of said cross-section contemplated to be further from a target site on the tissue being thicker than a portion contemplated to be nearer to the target site, to provide rigidity to the tissue contact member as well as more available space near the target site.

119. (Original) The device of claim 110, further comprising a porous filter covering at least a portion of said channels.

120. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 119, wherein each said porous filter is integrally molded with each said thin compliant seal, respectively.

121. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said seal is provided with one or more grooves to further enhance the flexibility of said seal.

122. (Original) The device of claim 104, further comprising a vacuum inlet mounted to said manifold base, wherein said vacuum inlet is rotatable with respect to said manifold base.

123. (Original) The device of claim 122, wherein said vacuum extends from a rotatable fitting adapted to snap fit over a vacuum inlet fitting extending from said manifold base, said rotatable fitting being rotatable with respect to said manifold base and said vacuum inlet being configured for connecting with a vacuum line.

124. (Original) The device of claim 104, further comprising a post having a distal end and a proximal end, said distal end connected to said manifold base and said proximal end terminated in a ball-shaped member.

125. (Original) The device of claim 104, wherein each said tissue contact member comprises an extremely low profile structural member and a thin compliant seal extending from a bottom perimeter of said structural member.

126. (Original) The device of claim 125, wherein each said thin compliant seal comprises a vacuum inlet adapted to connect with a vacuum line.

127. (Original) The device of claim 125, wherein said extremely low profile structural member is formed from a sheet of stainless steel.

128. (Original) A device for providing additional stabilization to tissue already in contact with a primary stabilization member, said device comprising:

at least one tissue contact member adapted to be placed on the tissue in an area bounded by primary tissue contact members; and

a connecting member extending from said at least one tissue contact member and adapted to be hand held or fixed to a relatively immovable object.

129. (Original) The device of claim 128, wherein said at least one tissue contact member comprises a base member having a central opening therethrough, said central opening adapted to allow access to a target site on the tissue.

130. (Original) The device of claim 129, wherein said base member is substantially oval-shaped.

131. (Original) The device of claim 130, wherein said oval-shaped member cants upwardly around an outer perimeter thereof in the shape of a cowboy hat.

132. (Original) The device of claim 129, wherein said base member has a substantially hollow interior adapted to develop a negative pressure therein.

133. (Original) The device of claim 132, wherein said connecting member fluidly connects with said substantially hollow interior and is adapted to be connected to a source of negative pressure.

134. (Original) The device of claim 132, wherein said base member further comprises openings through a bottom surface thereof, said openings being fluidly connected with said substantially hollow interior and adapted to apply a negative pressure to the tissue.

135. (Original) The device of claim 134, wherein said base member further comprises openings through an upper surface thereof, said openings through said upper surface being fluidly connected with a lumen that is connectable with a source of pressure that is independent of a pressure in said substantially hollow interior of said base member.

136. (Original) The device of claim 135, wherein said lumen runs inside of said connecting

member.

137. (Original) The device of claim 135 further comprising a manifold mounted inside said base member and fluidly connecting said lumen with said openings through said upper surface.

138. (Original) A system for stabilizing tissue within a patient's body comprising:

a primary tissue contact member having at least a pair of primary contact members adapted to contact the tissue and straddle a target site thereon;

a primary connecting member extending from said primary tissue contact member, said connecting member adapted to be fixed to a relatively stationary object to impart added stability to said primary tissue contact member;

a secondary tissue contact member adapted to be placed on the tissue in an area straddled by said primary contact members; and

a secondary connecting member extending from said secondary tissue contact member and adapted to be hand held or fixed to a relatively immovable object.

139. (Original) A method of stabilizing tissue at a location of a target site at which an operative procedure is to be performed, while tissue outside of the location remains in motion, said method comprising:

contacting the tissue in the vicinity of the location with a primary stabilizing instrument to stabilize the general vicinity of the location; and

contacting the tissue in a location between the location whether the primary stabilizing instrument contacts the tissue and the target site, to further stabilize the target site.

140. (Original) The method of claim 139, further comprising fixing said primary stabilizing instrument to a relatively immovable object after said contacting the tissue.

141. (Original) The method of claim 140, further comprising fixing said secondary stabilizing instrument to a relatively immovable object after said contacting the tissue therewith.

142. (Original) The method of claim 141, wherein said primary and secondary stabilizing instruments are both fixed to a sternal retractor.

143. (Original) The method of claim 140, further comprising fixing said secondary stabilizing instrument to said primary stabilizing instrument after said fixing the primary stabilizing instrument and said contacting the tissue with the secondary stabilizing instrument.

144. (Original) The method of claim 140, further comprising fixing said secondary stabilizing instrument by hand holding the secondary stabilizing instrument.